POWER

New York Progressives Had a Great Night

By Andrea González-Ramírez, a senior writer for The Cut who covers systems of power.

1:05 P.M.

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Photo-Illustration: by The Cut; Photos: Getty Images

Progressive candidates backed by Zohran Mamdani and the Democratic Socialists of America scored major wins in New York's primary election on Tuesday, positioning the popular mayor and his allies as a powerful force come 2028. The victories are another warning sign to the Democratic establishment: Voters, angry at the party's leadership for not standing up to President Trump more aggressively and effectively, are betting on new blood.

Mamdani endorsed three congressional candidates, all of whom won their races against establishment-backed opponents. Assemblywoman Claire Valdez, a 36-year-old former union organizer, defeated Brooklyn borough president Antonio Reynoso in the race to succeed Representative Nydia Velázquez from the Seventh Congressional District. Velázquez, the first Puerto Rican woman elected to Congress, is retiring after serving more than three decades and backed Reynoso in the race. Across the river in Manhattan, former New York City comptroller Brad Lander, who became a close ally of Mamdani during the mayoral race last year, easily defeated two-term Representative Dan Goldman in New York's Tenth District — a widely expected outcome. But the biggest upset of the night was Darializa Avila Chevalier's victory over Representative Adriano Espaillat, the 71-year-old incumbent who has represented the 13th Congressional District for five terms. Espaillat, the powerful chair of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, was endorsed by House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries, Governor Kathy Hochul, state attorney general Letitia James, the state's AFL-CIO, and a slate of other establishment figures. But Avila Chevalier, a 32-year-old community organizer, made Espaillat the sixth House incumbent — four of them Democrats, including Goldman — to lose their race this election cycle.

Further down the ballot, Democratic Socialists also performed well in the primary despite super PACs spending nearly $3 million in support of more moderate candidates. In New York City, six DSA-endorsed candidates — Aber Kawas in State Senate District 12, Samantha Kattan in State Assembly

District 37, David Orkin in Assembly District 38, Christian Celeste Tate in Assembly District 54, Eon Huntley in Assembly District 56, and Illapa Sairitupac in Assembly District 65 — all won by double digits, in some cases unseating incumbents. In Buffalo, Adam Bojak won the primary for Assembly District 149, positioning him to become the first Democratic Socialist to represent western New York. In Syracuse, Maurice "Mo" Brown was leading the race in Assembly District 129, though the race remained too close to call as of Wednesday morning.

It's not just New York — across the country, other Democratic Socialists have won high-profile primary elections over the past few months. Last week, D.C. Councilmember Janeese Lewis George, who ran on the promise of making life in the nation's capital more affordable, won the city's mayoral primary. She is likely to face minimal opposition in the general election and is all but guaranteed to succeed Mayor Muriel Bowser. In Los Angeles, Councilmember Nithya Raman defeated reality TV star Spencer Pratt to secure her spot in the city's runoff election this November. And in Pennsylvania, Chris Rabb won the Democratic primary for the Third Congressional District. He is expected to easily win the general election to represent the nation's bluest House seat.

Speaking to supporters on Tuesday, Mamdani gestured at his historic primary upset last summer. "A year ago, it was not the end of a political movement," he said. "It was the beginning."